

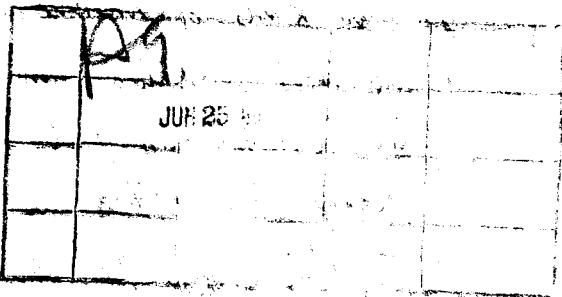
[1946?]

Wiscasset

Maine,

June 23, Sunday.

D. Alan Gregg
 The Rockefeller Foundation
 49 W 49
 N.Y.



Dear Gregg

Your latest Table d'Hoté arrived here two days ago and was read with much interest. It took me back to the last war; I wrote something in 1918, published in 1919 which in the last chapter suggested that political and economic sacrifices made absolute ~~in Europe~~ were hardly likely to develop collaboratively even under a League of Nations. And I was "walked into" properly by a reviewer Boyce Gibson who was Professor of Philosophy in the University of Melbourne. A colleague in Queensland (Languages & Literature) also seized a patriotic club and smashed my book off at under the title of "philosophic anarchism". Later and in the U.S. I was sent to Geneva several times by the Rockefeller industrial interests - on one occasion Mr. Raymond Fordich gave me an introduction to Sir Arthur Salter, and I laboured to persuade Thomas, Phelan, Salter, Brappan that verbal decisions and verbal discussions were useless unless related directly to clinical investigations of the situations under discussion (no diagnosis before careful examination). I used the Western Electric investigation to show how unexpected the actual sources of difficulty in industrial situations - that is, as compared with the statements in economic or political science textbooks. But it was useless - I remember that Salter told me that such investigations while "an interesting idea" were not practically possible. And they really were the "unpractical" people - it is extraordinary what value political scientists, economists, lawyers attach to endless wordy discussions that - as Janet has said - continue indefinitely and get nowhere.

I think that this substitute of knowledge is the chief defect of our modern universities in the social science area. In medicine a student is taught the need for two kinds of knowledge, two conceptions of method. In the laboratory a few facts abstracted from the complex and a complicated logic, in the clinic complicated fact and a few simple logics. Moreover he is taught to change his method as he crosses from the laboratory to the hospital clinic. In the clinic therefore he observes patiently, is very suspicious of brilliant flights of reasoning, is always alert for unexpected developments. You say that from chart now onwards we shall have to shut down temporarily on objective observation. Isn't that because in these social and psychological studies we have no clinical method and no conception of clinical method? Endeavours to be scientific that are not based on clinical skill and clinical observation are almost certain to be irrelevant or trivial. It is this skill that gives the first gleam of scientific insight and possibility — and it is in the clinic that the findings of an elaborate science logic are ultimately tested.

Where we have no such method, our elaborations almost inevitably take the road indicated by the rationalisation of our prejudices.

Yun table d'hôte expresses the dissatisfaction of a clinician

Best wishes

Yours very sincerely
Elton Mayo

As soon when I shall be fully printed and registered — no objection for the law must move in a mysterious way its wonders to perform.